Statement on UCEA-Sector unions roundtable on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic – 21 May 2020

UCEA and sector trade unions (EIS, GMB, UCU, UNISON and Unite) yesterday (20 May 2020) held a roundtable to discuss the situation facing higher education as a result of the pandemic crisis.

UCEA and unions agreed to explore opportunities to work together to highlight the scale of the financial challenge confronting higher education institutions.

UCEA and unions committed to work together to support the sector in developing a risk assessment-led approach to ensuring the safe reopening of campuses and a safe return to work for staff, taking into account equalities considerations, following the easing of restrictions. This will include working together on the development of principles on the reopening of institutions. UCEA and the unions will seek to work with the DfE, and equivalent departments in devolved nations, to ensure that there is clear, consistent and appropriate guidance for the sector.

UCEA and unions also committed to using the experiences of the pandemic to explore whether there could be, in the future, increased opportunities for flexible working and homeworking working across the sector, subject to business needs.

There will be further discussions to revisit existing sector resources, including the ACAS Digest on job security.

Talks will take place between UCEA and union representatives to progress each of the points discussed at yesterday's meeting. A further roundtable will also be scheduled in the coming weeks.